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# Seoul Hints at Developing A-Weapons

On the eve of President Carter's visit to South Korea, we have disturbing evidence that our Korean ally has in the past tried to force the United States to protect it by threatening to develop its own nuclear bombs. South Korea still may be employing this form of international blackmail.

According to a secret report by the Central Intelligence Agency, South Korea's President Park Chung Hee—regarded in many circles as a puppet dependent on U.S. military might for his survival—warned that "if the United States withdraws its nuclear umbrella, South Korea would have to begin developing its own nuclear weapons."

This instance of the tail wagging the dog would be laughable if it weren't for the hair-raising possibility that Park could make his threat a reality. Another CIA report noted that Park was trying to buy from France a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant that could produce plutonium, an essential ingredient of nuclear weapons. Pressure from the United States and Canada led Park to cancel the order, but the CIA reported that this would "not foreclose Seoul's program to develop nuclear weapons." The CIA refused to comment on the report.

State Department officials told us that the United States and South Korea indeed have discussed nuclear weapons, and "we have their assurance" that South Korea will not develop a nuclear arsenal. Officials expressed confidence that there is no imminent threat that Park will go back on this assurance, but they conceded that the South Koreans "still have the scientific capability," which, one offi-

cial added, "they will not use except in an extreme situation."

But another State Department official pointed out that the memory of a million deaths in the Korean War and the realization that Seoul is only 25 miles from the Demilitarized Zone are a constant reminder that "South Korea is always facing the enemy." In other words, a situation that the United States might not consider "extreme" may be deemed so by South Koreans.

There is no doubt that the South Koreans are engaged in an ambitious program of industrial nuclear development. They have a 564-megawatt reactor going into operation this year, a 629-megawatt reactor that will be operational in 1982 and a 605-megawatt reactor scheduled to go on line in 1983.

A Department of Energy official told us two more reactors—994 megawatts each—have been ordered and the Park regime is considering buying still more.

A nation with peaceful nuclear capability can always turn its knowledge to military production. This sobering fact, when taken in light of Park's threat, may have influenced Carter's decision not to withdraw American troops from South Korea as he at first indicated he would.

Keeping our troops and our nuclear weapons in South Korea may be the only way the United States can prevent membership in the "nuclear club" from getting out of hand. As one official noted, if the South Koreans develop the bomb, the Japanese leaders conceivably could feel the need to do likewise. And there is always the possibility that China would feel obliged to

give the North Koreans nuclear weapons know-how as well.

Park's blackmail, in short, is no idle threat.